

Daniel Buchholtz

From: Sen. Mary Kunesch <sen.mary.kunesch@mnsenate.gov>
Sent: Thursday, January 18, 2024 9:25 PM
To: Daniel Buchholtz; Bob Nelson; Ken Wendling; April Moran; Barbara Goodboe-Bisschoff; Lisa Dircks
Cc: Rep. Erin Koegel; Emma Zellmer
Subject: SLP MN Flag Work Group

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Good evening, Spring Lake Park mayor, Council Members, and City Administrator.

I am writing in response to the city council meeting that was held on January 17th, the discussion around the new state flag, and the upcoming work group on February 2.

I am your state Senator and thought I'd save you the bother of reaching out to your legislator by reaching out to you myself.

I am also the author of the bill that passed to create a commission to redesign the Minnesota state flag in the Senate and was an advisory member on the new flag/seal task force. Our committee met every Tuesday for months. We listened to experts, historians, vexillologists, professional designers, and encouraged public input. The design discussion was open to the public for every meeting, and we held in-person meetings that lasted entire days where the public was invited to share their thoughts. We took the task very seriously and to heart, and I am proud of the work we did. Were we able to make everyone happy? No, we did not. But I will challenge the man who stated 98% of Minnesotan's do not like the new flag.

I encourage you all to visit the State Emblem Redesign Commission web site to view the good work we did:
<https://www3.mnhs.org/serc>.

Mayor, I hear you when you state that your Ojibwe friends don't have an issue with the old flag. As a Lakota woman, I do. As do the vast majority of Minnesota's Indigenous people that I know and represent across our great state. They are deeply offended by that old flag and seal. I know that folks can look at just about anything and interpret it through their own lens, but it is very clear the intent of the design of the flag by Seth Eastman: "It symbolized the philosophy of manifest destiny, i.e., the white man taking over the frontier and pushing the Indians westward." Eastman's drawing, later incorporated into the state's seal, forecast the heavy price the Sioux and Chippewa nations would pay throughout the nineteenth century.

And if that were to be challenged, his wife, Mary Henderson Eastman, put to words the sentiment of the flag her husband designed: "Her words are poignant, not because she crafted her thoughts well but because they represent the zealously of the new arrivals that doomed the proud Indian nations.

"Give way, give way, young warrior,
Thou and thy steed give way;
Rest not, though lingers on the hills
The red sun's parting ray.
The rock bluff and prairie land
The white man claims them now,

The symbols of his course are here,
The rifle, axe, and plough.”

Change is not always easy for many people; the intent of adopting a new Minnesota flag was done through good intent, not malice. I would be happy to meet with the Council prior to your work group to answer any of your questions, participate in a discussion, to introduce myself, and explain why adopting a new flag and seal is the right and just thing to do.

Sincerely,

Senator Mary K Kunesh

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